

The Succession of Constantine S¹

•ears by the side of Diocletian and Galenas without discovering that if it came to war, it was the master of the best army who was sure to be the winner and survivor, whether his title were Caesar or Augustus. Thus, in July, 306, Constantine commenced his ventful reign as the Caesar of the West, overlord of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, and commander of the army of the Rhine, and, for the next six years, down to his invasion of Italy in 312, he spent most of his time in the Gallic provinces, where he gained his reputation of being a capable soldier and a generous Prince.

Gaul was slowly recovering from chaos and ruin* during the anarchy which had preceded the accession of Diocletian, she had lain at the mercy of the Germanic tribes across the Rhine. The Roman watch on the river had been almost abandoned; the legions and the garrisons had been so weakened as to be powerless to keep the invader in check. The Gallic provinces were, in the striking words of the historian, "maddened by their injuries of the years gone by."* The result had been the peasant rising of the Bagaudai, ruthlessly suppressed by Maximian

285, but the desperate condition of the country may be inferred from the fact that Diocletian and Maximian felt compelled to recognise the pretensions

Carausius in the province of Britain, which, for many years, was practically severed from the Empire, and, moreover, the peace of Gaul, which Maximian laboriously restored, was punctuated by invasions of the Germans across the Rhine. In the I*anc-